

Andrew Jackson to William Charles Cole Claiborne, January 8, 1807, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO W. C. C. CLAIBORNE.

Nashville, January 8, 1807

Dear friend , On Sunday last I recd, your friendly letter by Mr Hopkins, bearer of Dispatches to the Secratary of State, of the united States, of date the 5th of December last acknowledging the receipt of mine of the 12th. of November—and from the denunciation made by Genl Wilkeson of Colo. Burr as published in the Orleans Gazette of Decbr. 11th. I find that my suspicions and friendly warning, was in due time and not without foundation. Mr. Hopkins produced to me your pasport, stating him to be the bearer of dispatches to the Secratary of State, and named to me he wanted a horse, which I immediately furnished on the faith of your passport, and the idea of the exigency of the case, and he progressed immediately, but from information of his conduct, recd. before he reached me and of his conduct after he left me, I have strong suspicions, that he is tainted; as to his conduct after he left me, I refer you to genl J. Winchester letter a coopy of which is inclosed marked No 1.

We have been in a bustle here for some days owing to information recd. from the war department,¹ and his letter to me of the 19th, ult I cannot call it an order. It is of a doubtfull hue, a milk and cider thing, displays a want of firmness that renders him unfit, for the office he holds or even first scullion in a cook shop, but I knew my duty, and the appearence of our country required action. I ordered out 12 companies of the militia, Despatched a messenger to fort Massac, to be informed, of the truth of a report, that was currently circulated, that colo Burr, was assembled at the mouth of cumberland with 100 Boats and

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1000 armed men. the express has just returned, and for the result of the enquiry I refer you to a copy of Capt Bissle letter to me and Mr Morrell report, who was the messenger,

1 The feeling towards Burr is shown in the following letters to Gen. Daniel Smith. Gen. James Robertson wrote, Feb. 2, 1807, from Nashville: "We are all quiet at preasent, but there was an uncommon bustle for several weekes after the Presidents proclimation appeared here, and if it had reached this place before Burrs departure he would have been arrested, notwithstanding his acquital in Kentuckey. You know before the exposition of his [schemes] he was held in high esteem by the citizens of this place, on account of the exertions he made in the Senate of the United States at the time of our admission as an independant State into the union. But when the proclimation appeared the general cry was let us to a man go in a mass to surpress such base projects, and bring Burr and his adherents to the bar of justice, and I believe it would not have been difficult to have raised a thousand volunteers to have gone to Natchez, or New Orleans from west Tennessee. Burr as I understand, at his leaving Nashville with two boats still insisted that his intention was to settle in lower Louisanna, and that he was taking provisions to furnish his son in law, and thre that would go with him from South Carolina. We are informed that Burr is now in custody at Natchez; I am lead to believe that if there was a plan to divide our government or do any other thing inimical to the United States, that it will be of service in future, as the project is so timely detected. I think it may more thourily sement every part of the union, and keep it out of the power of any person or persons to effect such attempts again. I have been in a number of assemblies since the plan seemes to be understood; and the general voice is *death* to him or them that shall attempt to disunite the best goverment [in the world]. I have no doubt and I think I may venture to say, are as much attached to the constitution and goverment of the. United States as any in it. and I believe would go as fare to protect its laws. I am Sir with sentiments of esteem"

Jan. 16, 1807, William Martin wrote from Belle View:

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“With us, it is all noise and bussle. the Huincry, is raised after Col Burr, and party. which now presents a more serious aspect than heretofore. He Burr, left the mouth of Cumberland, twenty days ago. Accounts vary as risp's his strength, the highest of which is 160 men with 12 or 15 boats of different discriptions—the object of his enterprise (I presume) you are better acquainted, with, than we can be here. the understanding here is, that they are to act against Neworleans, where he is to be Joined by Wilkason, and the federal troops there, together, with a detachment from New-York, which is to act by water. with those Auxilaries, no devination is required to predict the fate of that place, from whence in concert with some of the Spanish Chiefs, an attempt is to be made on New Mexico, and form a Grand empire of that and the U. States. Is this not a hint of Miranda's Chain. the public mind here is much agitated on this Occasion, we have 100 Volunteers, in the Neighborhood of Dixons Spring, which are now waiting for marching orders, beside a Great many more in other parts of the County—why Government did not take earlier measures to counteract this abominable Conspiracy, is what I cant account for. We have been lying on our arms, in a state of perpetual alarm, for a considerable length of time past, waiting for the word go, without knowing what we shall have to do. I am much alarmed on account of those delays. If Burr is not arrested on the Mississippi, which I think is not probable he will be able to put his project into full opperation, before we could be brought to act against him. for my own part I expect that this is a deep laid, and far fetched plan, and in which there are many concerned, of whom we have as yet had no sispicions. I hear that many of our watchmen have deserted their posts. If so, the more vigilance is requ[i]red of the rest. . . . I wish you health and happiness

“PS Much has been said in the public prints, respting Burrs influence in the Western Country but if he has any adherents here, they dare not let it be known.”

on which I have ordered that the militia return to their respective homes, and be ready to march at a minutes warning. Colo. Burr left Nashville on the 22nd. with two Boats, six

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horses and a cow and two families consisting of one man and three woman, with Eight oarsmen, six of which returned from the mouth of Cumberland.

From the information, on which my letter to you was written, altho it was asked by me whether Colo Burr was knowing to the plans and answered in the negative, still my suspicions were such that I first wrote to him on the subject and obtained an express pledge of honour that he never had any ideas hostile to the union or its interest, and that he had the authority of the united States, for any thing or project he had in view, after the grand Jury had not only acquitted him in the District of Kentuckey, but passed an encomium on his views, he returned here, and thus shielded from suspicion still was entitled to respect, under these circumstances, he obtained Stockely Hays to accompany him with the consent of the Colo, under great promises of friendship, and solemn pledges of no intentions hostile or inimical to the united States. My letter by Stockly, you will receive, and I must confess, I was not clear or free from suspicion, and directed Stockly when he reached Orleans, to be subject to your advice and if he saw any act or things that wore hostility to our government and laws, to burst the chains of friendship and flee to the standard of his country. This he has pledged himself to do. Since he left me from Doctor Dixsons letter I have reasons to believe that Testimony was filed before the 15th. December, of his hostile designs against our government. Still the Secretary at wars nerves is so weak or his attachment so strong to his friend the Genl, that his modesty is such he cannot give names, but wishes to throw the responsibility off his Shoulders on those of Other individuals. O my friend you have a right to know my attachment to Republicanism, to the present administration, but as to the war department, I am obliged to exclaim o *Tempora, o moris* . you I believe do know My attachment to my country, but still I fear we want nerve, to purge the body politic of Treason and conspiracy. I shall write you more fully when I have leisure, should Stockly reach you keep him with you untill he can return, to his country and friends. I wish you to write me relative to Mr Hopkins, he stated to me, that he was bearer of the Political death warrent of the Genls. military existan[ce].

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you my Dear Sir must be on the lookout, you must have confidence but in few, but apparent confidence in all. There is Genl Adair that is gone to your country, on some business, whether of a public or private nature I know not but one thing is generally believed that Wilkeson with several others, will feel themselves in desperate situations and make use of Desperate means, to procure a country and a home, and I am clearly of opinion that a seperation of the union is the first object. If in this thing they should be disappointed, I know not neither can I conjecture what the[y] will attempt.

But my friend the patriotism of my Division has amply displayed, itself. figure to yourself, Genl Robertson at the head of a volunteer company, composed of old patriots over fifty, such as Genl Overton Major Howel Tatom, Major Clem Hall, George Ridley etc., etc., etc., rendering their services to their Genl and country—what sensasions must this inspire is more easily conjectured than expressed. Should danger threaten you, write me, and under your notification, on the wings of patriotism I will hasten to the point of danger, to support the union of our country the prop of freedom, with the arm of vengeance that shall burst on treason and on treasons head if it be found, and on Spanish insolence and pride, should the constituted Authority order it. Excuse the haste in which this letter is written and accept assurances of a continuation of friendship.